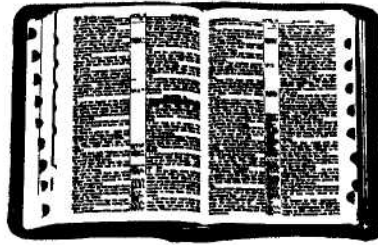


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me"—John 5:39



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"—Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

VOLUME XXXII

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NUMBER 6

THINK ON
THESE THINGS

H. E. Phillips

P.O. Box 1631
Lutz, FL 33549



THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

Those in the kingdom are the same individuals who are in the church. The authority of Christ is complete (Matt. 28: 18). He is the head overall things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1: 22, 23). Moses said Christ would be a prophet—a law giver—like he was, and all who did not hear him would be destroyed from among the people (Acts 3: 22, 23). All the prophets from Samuel and those who spoke afterward foretold of this (vs. 24).

When God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, he promised that all nations would be blessed in him; and promised him a land for his seed (Gen. 12: 3, 7; 13: 15; 22: 18). "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts 7: 5). His faith in God that He would do what He had promised caused Abraham to act as if he had children (cf. Rom. 4: 16-22).

The promise made to Abraham was reiterated to Isaac, the promised son of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 26: 4). Again, it was repeated to Jacob, the chosen son of Isaac (Gen. 28: 3, 4; 13, 14). The same promise was made to Judah by Jacob (Gen. 49: 8-12; Heb. 7: 14). Furthermore, the promised seed was made to the house of David, the tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob,

Isaac and Abraham. Matthew tells us that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David (Matt. 1: 17), and this is the line of the promised seed.

The Holy Spirit by prophecy and fulfillment tells us who the promised seed is in whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. Nathan the prophet told David, "... And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7: 12, 13). This statement contains the dual picture of God's people in the "promised seed" to Abraham through David, as the church and the kingdom. He would "build an house for my name." The church is called the house of God (1 Tim 3: 15). He would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. He would be seated on the throne to reign until the last enemy was destroyed (1 Cor. 15: 24-26). This refers to the same people and the fulfillment is at the same time and the same place.

Jesus Christ is that PROMISED SEED of prophecy to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and to the house of David. The New Testament tells us so (Rom. 1: 3; Gal. 4: 16). The fact that he was the son of David was not disputed while Christ lived. (Matt. 22: 41-46).

Keep in mind that we are talking about a promise made to Abraham, and repeated to Isaac, Jacob, and to Judah and the house of David, that the promised seed in this line would bless all nations of the earth, and this seed would sit upon the throne of his father David and rule in his kingdom forever. This one seed is Christ (Gal. 4: 16). God has but one nation of people, and they are in this seed who is Christ. "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3: 29). There is no way one can get two institutions out of this promise and its fulfillment; one as a kingdom and the other as the church. The kingdom and church refer to this one body of people in Christ who are referred to as "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The Called Out Kings And Priests of God

Christ died to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good

works (Titus 2: 14). This "peculiar" people are all those who are purified unto him as his own possession. They are his people—all of his people. They are a "chosen generation"—an elect race. They are built up a spiritual house on the elect foundation: Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2: 4-9). They are called a "royal priesthood." Christ is High Priest and every saint a priest, composing a royal or kingly priesthood. They are called a "holy nation," who were not a people, but now are the people of God (1 Pet. 2: 9).

The new song of praise to the Lamb which is recorded in Revelation 5: 9, 10, have these words: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." God's people are described as both a "called out" people and "kings and priests" who shall reign on earth. We have the description of both the church and kingdom.

The royal priesthood would be meaningless without the High Priest. Christ became our high priest to offer his own blood for our sins (Heb. 8: 4). He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6: 20; 7: 17; 3: 1). Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of the most high God at the same time (Heb. 7). He had none who preceded him and none who would follow him in his priesthood. Christ was a priest after this order. He was of the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses said nothing concerning priesthood (Heb. 7: 15). His priesthood will be for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7: 17). We have such an high priest now in the heavens, and he is Jesus Christ (Heb. 4: 14).

Christ became high priest after he ascended into heaven, because he could not be a priest on earth (Heb. 8: 4). But when he ascended into heaven to the right hand of God, he received dominion, and glory, and a kingdom (Psalm 110: 1-4; Dan. 7: 13, 14). When Christ sat down on the right hand of God and began to rule as king, and he would be a priest on his throne as he reigned. "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6: 13).

" QUOTE
"He who praises everybody praises nobody."
—Samual Johnson
UNQUOTE "

Searching The Scriptures

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Irven Lee (1914-1991)

Irven Lee, a well known and greatly loved servant of the Lord, passed away on May 4, 1991 at the age of 76. Funeral services were conducted by Wayne Moore and Bob Waldron (brother Lee's sons-in-law) on May 6 at the Limestone Chapel in Athens, AL.

We express our sympathy to sister Lee and his two daughters, Judy Moore and Sandra Waldron.

Bob Waldron will have more to say about brother Lee in a future issue of STS.

Those wishing to express sympathy to sister Lee may write to her at 405 Cruther Circle, Athens, AL 35611.

Editorial

Donnie V. Rader

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

When one obeys the gospel, the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2: 47). He is a member of the church in the universal sense. However, that within itself does not necessarily identify one with a local church. What does the Bible say about membership in the local church? What does it mean to be a member? Does the fact that one attends mean that he is a member? What about those whose names are in the directory, but seldom darken the door? Should they be considered as members?

Let's see what the Bible says in answer to these questions and try to clarify some misconceptions about local church membership.

Local Church Membership Is Necessary

1. *Without members there would be no local church.* Local churches consist of members. The saints at Philippi were the church (Phil. 1: 1). The Christians at Corinth were the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 2). The same was true at Antioch (Acts 13: 1). Thus, local church membership is essential to a local church. To argue that local church membership is not essential is to do away with the local church.

2. *Without local church membership elders cannot have the oversight that the Bible describes.* Elders are to shepherd the flock of God which is among them (1 Pet. 5: 1-2). Elders have rule and authority among those in the local church (Acts 20: 28; Heb. 13: 17). Without local church membership, elders would not have this oversight. The sphere of their authority obviously is not just to Christians living in a general area. If so, could elders in areas like Athens, AL, Louisville, KY or Tampa, FL (where there are a number of churches) have authority and oversight over any and all the Christians living in their area? Of course not. In light of 1 Pet. 5: 1-2, elders only have the oversight of those who are members of the local church where they are members. Thus, to argue that local church membership is non-essential is to eliminate the authority and oversight of the elders.

3. *Without local church membership disciplinary action cannot be carried out.* The church at Corinth was instructed to "put away from yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5: 13). This, obviously, is not barring him from attendance, for one could be disciplined and still attend the worship services. This "putting away" refers to (or at least includes) removing him as a member of the

local church.

The church at Thessalonica was told to "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly..." (2 Thess. 3: 6). This cannot be done without local church membership. How can we put away "from among us" a wicked brother who is not a member?

We must be careful not to draw the wrong conclusion. This does not mean that there is never a time when he/she may not be identified with a local church for a short period. For example, one may move into an area where there are a number of churches and spend four to six weeks visiting around until they decide where they want to be members. However, if I conclude from this that I don't ever have to be a member of a local church, then I can also conclude that no one else does either. Thus, away with the local church, its elders and discipline.

Identifying Or "Placing Membership"

Though the phrase "placing membership" is not found in the text, the concept of identifying with a local congregation is justified by the text. There are examples of Christians seeking to identify with local congregations where they went.

1. *Paul sought to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem (Acts 9: 26-28).* At first, they were afraid and would not receive him for they did not believe he was a disciple. Yet, after Barnabas declared that he was a child of God and had boldly preach the gospel, they received him.

2. *Paul and Barnabas were identified with the church at Antioch (Acts 13: 1).* Luke tells us that they assembled with the church there for a whole year (Acts 11: 25-26). But, they were more than mere visitors in the assembly, for the same writer says that Barnabas and Saul were among those teachers "in the church" at Antioch (Acts 13: 1). Thus, they must have identified with the local church.

3. *Apollos sought to be received by the brethren in Achaia (Acts 18: 27).* When Apollos left Ephesus, the brethren there thought it necessary to write and encourage the brethren in Achaia to receive him. The same verse indicates that the brethren at Corinth did receive him. Again, we have a Christian being identified with a local church.

Accepting And Rejecting Members A local church has a right to *accept* or *reject* people as members of that church. Obviously, this is not some type of arbitrary decision as Diotrephes tried (3 Jno.).

1 Cor. 5: 1-13 instructs the church at Corinth to reject the fornicator who was in their midst. They were to do this because he was guilty of *wickedness* that would corrupt the church (vs. 6, 13).

2 Thess. 3: 6-14 directs the church at Thessalonica to reject any who walked "disorderly." That included the lazy man and the busybody.

From these passages we conclude that any rejection is based on whether that person lives according to the word or walks disorderly.

Churches have a *right* and *duty* to know who they are accepting. The church at Jerusalem would not accept Paul until they knew more about him (Acts 9: 26-28). The Ephesians saw a need to encourage the brethren in

Achaia to receive Apollos (Acts 18: 27). That tells me that the church at Corinth would not have received him until they knew who he was and the things for which he stood. Brethren are wise to ask a few questions of those who come desiring to place membership.

It is just as bad to accept anyone without question as it is to fail to discipline those who should be rejected. **What Does It Mean To Be A Member?**

1. *It is not an honorary club.* There is nothing to be gained by having our names on the church roll or in a directory in and of itself. Each member is a functioning unit (1 Cor. 12).

2. *It means work, duty and responsibility.* It's some- what like being a member of the armed forces. We have witnessed in recent months that it involves more than a rank and paycheck. It means work when the call is given.

Being a member means that I have a responsibility to *attend* the assemblies of the church where I am a member (Heb. 10: 25). It means *contributing* into the local treasury (1 Cor. 16: 1-2), *teaching* as one's ability allows (Acts 13: 1; Heb. 5: 12), *restoring* the erring (Gal. 6: 1), *working together harmoniously* (Rom. 14: 19), *supporting disciplinary action* (1 Cor. 5) and *worshipping together* (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 11).

So, when you announce that you want to be a member of a certain congregation, you are saying that you want to be active and be a part of the work. You are willing to participate and involve yourself in the work that the church is doing.

I am amused at people who want to be considered as members and have their names in the directory, yet, they are not willing to attend all of the services, not to mention the other work.

Misconceptions About Being A Member In A Local Church

1. *"Being a member of a local church of Christ puts me with those who are going to heaven."* The idea is that we will be judged as a congregation. Since this church is going to heaven, then I am too, because I am a member. This ignores the fact that we will be judged individually (Rom. 14: 12).

2. *"I'm still a member where my letter" is. I've been worshipping here for five years, but I'm still a member where we used to live since I never 'moved my letter'."* This doesn't fit the examples in the New Testament. In Paul's journeys, he identified with churches where he traveled.

The Bible doesn't talk about one being a member where he doesn't attend, contribute and work.

3. *"There is no need to be members of this congregation. We just want to attend."* The fact that Paul identified with the church at Jerusalem (Acts 9: 26) indicates a need. The fact that we are to submit to elders (Heb. 13: 17) also suggest the need to be members. Any passage that speaks of the local church and its work speaks of the need to be a member.

4. *"Anyone who is considered a member is approved of God and the brethren."* This is not necessarily so. Members may behave in unbecoming and ungodly ways that other brethren may never see. Just because a person is a member where I am doesn't mean that I

approve of all they do. They may be guilty of things that I never know. Furthermore, there may be suspicion of wrongdoing. But, without evidence, action cannot be taken.

On the other hand, when the sin is obvious and the evidence is not lacking, action is demanded by the authority of Christ (1 Cor. 5).

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MUSINGS

J. Wiley Adams

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WELL, I THOUGHT I KNEW!

A friend of mine was telling about an old gentleman who asked him if he knew where the non-white races of people came from. The friend said he knew, to which the old fellow replied, "No you don't neither." My friend, somewhat at a loss as to what to say but wishing to be courteous, said, "Well, I'm sorry, sir. **There for a minute I thought I knew.** By the way, sir, just where did they come from?" This question was just what he was waiting for and he said with great finality, "outer space."

Well, through the years there are many things which I thought I knew — until lately. For instance, I thought I knew the difference between "faith" and "the faith" but now I am told they are the same thing. **But, I thought I knew there for a minute.**

I thought I knew that Romans 14 was a discourse about how to treat a weak brother with respect to matters of indifference but now I am told that in reality this is a kind of "umbrella" under which to pile all the things we disagree on so we can continue in fellowship. By George, I was wrong again. **But there for a minute I thought I had it.**

All my life I thought there were three dispensations of Bible history. But, oops, I missed it again. Really you see there is the moral law, the Mosaic law and the law of Christ. A fellow has to really be careful with his Bible or he will miss it for sure.

It used to be that the Seventh Day Adventists talked about the ceremonial and the moral law of God. Whatever happened to the law of the patriarchs with its altars and sacrifices? What is "moral" about that? But I guess I just missed it all the way around. **But for a while there I thought I understood it!**

I always thought that a testament and a covenant were the same and in contrasting them referred to them as the old and the new. **But there you go. I am wrong again.**

I have always believed that I could take my Bible, read it, understand it, go by its teachings, die, and go on to Heaven. But, now I am beginning to realize what a dummy I really am. You see, we used to chide various religious groups for having creeds, manuals, prayer books, and catechisms to supplement the Bible. Now I find that some brethren seem to be saying you have to have the "historic" approach in order to come to a full knowledge of the Truth. Others are seeming to say we must have certain word study books or we cannot determine the difference in the law of Moses and law in

general. **Foiled again!**

Well, I am wondering just what is the matter with me by this time. I guess it is probably this King James Version I use and from which I memorized all my Scriptures from an early age. I have never taught nor do I believe it is the only good version of the Bible. I do believe it is a good version. Some have facetiously implied that some seem to believe that the apostle Paul carried the KJV with him on his journeys all the time. I could just as well say and with as much logic that they seem to be saying that he carried around the American Standard Version. I have been wrong so many times, I guess I could be wrong again. I cannot help but take note of the obvious fact that the more new versions we get the more uncertain many brethren are as to what they believe. Some versions, instead of helping the case, only add to existing problems. Kind of like Lard's Commentary on Romans. The book of Romans is much easier to understand.

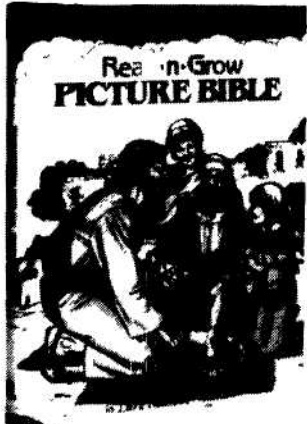
But I tell you what. So far, I have never heard anyone say you cannot use the KJV to learn what to do to be saved, live a godly life, and go to Heaven finally.

But just in case I am wrong about that also, I really need to check with the CSH (Christian San Hedrin) to see if these things are so. If you do not think we have one among us you have not been very alert lately. Arrogant academics are not a substitute for Divine Truth. Nor do I believe that I must run to the "Priest" to discover what I must believe.

All of these things considered it is enough to make one wonder if a plain Jane such as myself has sense enough to go Heaven. I still may have one of two alternatives left, however. (1) I might make it in through the fool hole, or, (2) just be honest and sincere, as some are implying.

We need to break up this spiritual log-jam we seem to be in, brethren. The Truth is understandable. It is not as hard as some are making it. Let us not be as the philosophers on Mars Hill and become intrigued with some "new thing" as it seems some are prone to do. If it is new it is not true.

"Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5: 17).



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MUSINGS

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VACATION OR VACILLATION?

Only about ten other listings separate these two words in my dictionary. Some brethren need to take a closer look at their practice, and decide what they are doing.

When we take a vacation, we are free from a duty or service. When we vacillate, we waver or fluctuate. I'm convinced that when some take a vacation from secular employment, they attempt to free themselves from their commitments to the Lord and his body, the church. Thus, they waver (vacillate), in their relationship to Christ.

Most who read this column see the difference between individual and collective duties; between the secular and the religious. There are those among us who do not make this distinction, just as there are those who scoff at the idea of any collective or public work and worship in the church. I doubt if I can help those in these latter categories.

In the past, we have stressed the need for assembling with the church, pointing out the advantages of assembling and the disadvantages of failing to do so. We have fortified our position with such passages as Mt. 18: 20 and Heb. 10: 25.

Along this same line, we concede that if a person consents to a thing being right, and then violates that conviction, that he sins (Eccl. 5: 4, 5; Acts 5: 4; Rom. 14: 14-23; 1 Jno. 3: 20).

This being true, how can brethren be faithful to their convictions (and urge them upon others), for 50 weeks out of the year, and then vacillate while on vacation the other two weeks of the year? They plan a vacation from secular pursuits, with no thoughts or plans to discharge their acknowledged responsibilities to the Lord and his body, the church.

It is ironic, and almost humorous, to hear brethren condemn others when the one condemning "doest the same things" (Rom. 2: 1; 14: 22). It is all right to forsake the Lord when on vacation, but not at any other time. Some think their vacillation is justified while on a tour, but not while hunting, fishing, or camping. Others seem to think a thing is wrong in the continental United States, but not in a foreign country or in island possessions. Some preachers will engage in this double standard themselves, then return home and condemn their

brethren in the local congregation for not being faithful to the assemblies of the church.

Heb. 10: 25 means what it says except when on the vacation of **your** choice.

Then, there are others who attempt to resolve this dilemma by temporarily taking the worship of the church with them, or part of it. (Make sure you "get" the Lord's supper even if you miss everything else.) No wonder some brethren say, "Now we come to the most important part of the worship," when they "wait on the table. "

Again, the inconsistency of some is evident. It is proper to take the Lord's supper with you on a tour, but not while hunting or fishing. Or, it is permissible while camping, but not while golfing or just staying home with the TV and the Sunday paper.

Brethren, we need to (1) get our practice in harmony with the scriptures and (2), get consistent in what we teach. We establish the local congregation as the only expression of organization which God has given the church on earth, then proceed to circumvent the very thing which we teach.

Yes, times of assembly, providing for our own, sickness, natural disasters, and such things become a matter of judgment and priority in all of our lives and activities. But, if we can decide such matters for 48 or 50 weeks out of the year, why not the rest of the time? Or, when we retire from secular employment, are we accountable to the Lord at all?

Vacation or vacillation, which is it? Or, is it both?

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Ever tried to climb a greased pole? Even if you haven't, you know that it's almost impossible, even for an excellent climber in tip-top shape. For the rest of us it's just downright impossible.

Well some have put salvation at the top of a greased pole and are constantly exhorting folks to climb right up and enjoy the benefits.

This extreme has probably been occupied as a reaction to the idea of escalator salvation. Once one steps onto the escalator, no effort is necessary whatever. One might expedite matters by taking a few steps, but one does not need to do so to reach the destination. Such is the view of those who hold to the doctrine of unconditional security. The doctrine is certainly contrary to many simple and clear passages in God's word. Heb. 4: 11 exhorts us to "be diligent to enter that rest." Rev. 2: 10 demands that we "be faithful unto death." Escalator religion is contrary to sound doctrine.

Equally erroneous, however, is the concept of conditional insecurity. Perhaps such a doctrine has not been actively taught. But it has been accepted by way of default. I would think that the great assurance that is constantly given the faithful, striving, child of God should be administered in equal doses, at least, in our teaching as the warnings against falling or drifting away from so great a salvation.

Even before the plan of salvation was consummated at the cross, the people of God expressed great assurance: "The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe" (Prov. 29: 25); "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forever" (Ps. 121: 7, 8); "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23: 6).

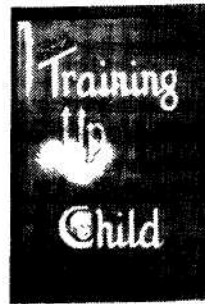
Do we who are privileged to live under a better covenant, established upon better promises, possess less confidence than the people of a darker age? May it never be!

Paul lived in the security of God's love. Because life to him was Christ, he could declare confidently that to die was gain and to depart was to be with the Lord (Phil. 1: 21-23; 2 Cor. 5: 6-8). He could say this in spite of the fact that he had not reached perfection in this life (Phil. 3: 12-16).

He exulted in the knowledge that a crown of life awaited him and all who love His appearing (2 Tim. 4: 8). Jude commends us all to the God who is able to keep us from falling (verse 24). Peter declares that "if" (that's conditional, folks), "you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1: 10, 11).

Let us examine ourselves. Are we preaching a greased pole salvation? Are we guilty of binding "heavy burdens, hard to bear" when we ourselves will not move them with one of (our) fingers" (Mt. 29: 3)? Let us balance warning with consolation that the committed and submissive Christian might be motivated to sing with rejoicing and praise: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God; Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood."

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Things Most Certainly Believed

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOB "WHERE IS GOD?"

In the interest of continuity we remind that Job was an Old Testament patriarch living hundreds of years before Christ. Even so, within the Old Testament there are types and shadows which look to the New Testament for the anti-type and substance. These references within the framework of God's eternal purpose to redeem lost man are a pointing to the Christ and the revelation of the plan of human redemption. At times these references are glaring, at other times they are subtle, but in either case the ultimate aim is Christ. We are examining some of Job's statements, his questions, which clearly point to Christ and the gospel.

"O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat" (Job 23: 3)! This is a part of Job's response to the third and final cycle of explanations offered by Job's friends, the last speech of Eliphaz. Eliphaz steadfastly maintains suffering results from sin describing in no uncertain terms his perception of Job's sin as great wickedness and infinite iniquities (22: 5). While he attributes this to Job, no evidence is offered. Thus leading to the conclusion his indictment is speculative and false. He ends his speech with "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (22: 21).

In reply, Job ignores the charges and replies to the advice give by his friends. In effect he asks "How?" "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" This is the language of a man with conviction about God. Of one convinced if he could find him he would give heed to him. Our man flounders in his search declaring he has looked forward and backward, to the left and to the right, and yet does not perceive Him. Obviously his directional view fails of the upward dimension, Job has not looked up. Even if he had there is every indication that he would have still said he could not reach him.

There is an abiding frustration among men that seek God on earth level. Their search, like Job, may be the result of pressure and tribulation. It may be the search of intellect for the riddle of the universe. Within these, God is not necessarily denied, there may even be an acceptance of his being, but he cannot be found. Why? Men do not make contact with God by earth-bound actions. Some honestly tell us they find God in

nature, that they have no need of worship activities. This is not true. Indeed, God is evidenced in nature, all creation glorifies the creator. But, God is not found in nature so as to satisfy a nagging necessity without our being.

"O that I knew where I might find Him!" reveals the need of special revelation to satisfy man's inner longing. Zophar has previously said "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (cf. 11: 7). Now Eliphaz, "Acquaint thyself with God" and Job ratifies the difficulty expressed by Zophar. Where is the answer for Job? More importantly, where is the answer for you and me?

The intervening centuries have run their course, the climax of revelation in the New Testament brings us to a scene in Jerusalem where in an upper room with his disciples, Jesus is heard to respond to Philip. "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us" (Jn. 14: 8). Is this not essentially what Job said? The reply, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (v. 9). In this response Jesus asks Philip, by implication, to look back over the period with Him, remember all the things seen and heard, the miracles, the examples of compassion, grace and mercy. Thus, Philip had seen the Lord, proof of every claim is in evidence. Jesus had spoke from the Father, he had worked the works of the Father, this was conclusive proof.

Based on this Jesus makes an appeal to Philip and the rest of the disciples, an appeal to you and me. He says, "believe me" because of myself, who I am. Not only this, "believe me for the very works' sake." Indeed, an abiding challenge. The New Testament Gospels present the person of our Lord. We may find him in Bethesda's porches among the derelicts (Jn. 5) or, in the midst of the rulers with a sinful woman before a watching crowd (Jn. 8). Wherever, there is a projecting line into infinitude and upon following it up we are seeing God. When we with fear and trembling see Jesus, eyes as flaming fire indicting the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, or, wet with tears at the graveside of Lazarus, or, viewing the doomed city of Jerusalem, we are seeing God. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1: 14).

Thus, the cry of all humanity if there is the slightest perception of God and relation to him is reflected in Job's "O that I knew where I might find Him!" in Philip's, "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." The answer is full and final, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Furthermore, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father" and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither, knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Mt. 11: 27).

Revelation did come to Job subsequently, but only partially, never fully. To Philip revelation came in its fullness in and by the person of the Lord. And not only so, but to you and me, fully and completely in Jesus Christ, His person and works are revealed in the Gospel. God be thanked. Every sincere seeker can indeed find.

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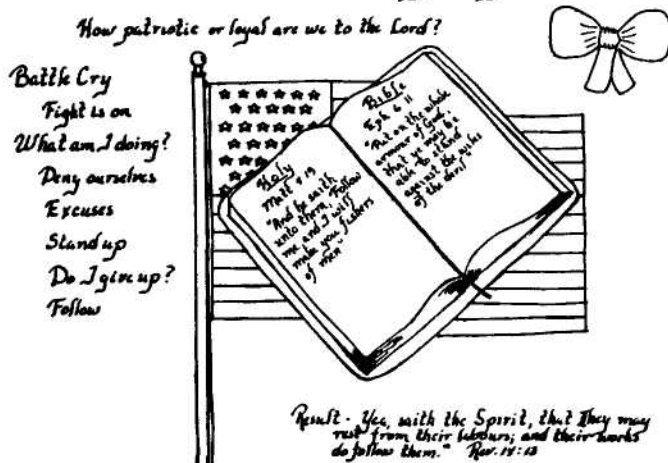
PATRIOTISM — LOYALTY

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Patriotism - Loyalty

How patriotic or loyal are we to the Lord?



In the past months we have witnessed a nation of people pull together. Why is that? I realize I'm too young to remember the Korean War and World War II, but I have heard much about the things that went on. I grew up during the Viet Nam War and there was one thing I noticed that was missing during the Viet Nam War that the Korean War, World War II and the Persian Gulf War had. That one thing was Patriotism or Loyalty.

Definition

Webster defines patriotism as: "love and loyal or zealous support of one's own country, especially in all matters involving other countries-nationalism." Loyalty is: "quality, state, or instance of being loyal, faithfulness or faithful adherence to a person, government, cause, duty." Keep these definitions in mind as you read the article.

The war we have so closely followed in the days past brought about the feelings and the actions of patriotism. Men and women were willing to go to war to stop a mad man from destroying other people. People back home who couldn't go felt the need to do something to support those in Saudi Arabia. Each day we heard of support groups, rallies, and prayer vigils forming everywhere. People everywhere began to fly the American flag, tie the yellow ribbon on many different objects or wear something with red, white and blue on it. This helped to make people feel that they were a part of the war. There was a cause to fight for and leaders to follow and support.

When you begin to make an analogy of the war of Saudi Arabia and the spiritual warfare in which a Christian should be engaged, a question comes to mind.

How patriotic or loyal are we to the Lord and his battle?

Are we following our leader like we should? When one loses faith in his leader he will be defeated in battle. We saw that happen on many occasions during the war. The enemy was surrendering because they no longer trusted their leader.

As in any war, you will also have casualties. As we see the spiritual battle rage on around us we see the same conditions existing among the soldiers of the cross. Their faith in Christ is weak and they give in to Satan and his temptations and go back into the world (2 Pet. 2: 20-22). Or, on the other hand they have been tried and wounded but become stronger and want to fight the battle even more. What type of soldier are you? **Call of the Lord**

From the beginning of time God has called on men to follow him and do his will. In the days of Noah, God called on him to make an ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6: 13-14). Noah did all that God commanded (v. 22). It was said of Noah, that he "walked with God" (Gen. 6: 9).

In Genesis chapter 12 we read of Abram being called of God to go unto a land that he would be shown. Abram didn't hesitate, He departed as the Lord commanded (v. 4). Abraham was known as the Friend of God (James 2: 23). Why? He followed God and was loyal to him.

Our Lord and Saviour has called men to follow him. Jesus went to Galilee and there found Peter, Andrew, James and John and said to them "Come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matt. 4: 19-21). Are you following Jesus? Are you a Christian? If not, you need to realize that no one can go to heaven unless they do the will of the Father (Matt. 7: 21-25). If you are a Christian you need to realize the battle cry has been sounded and we need to be fighting the spiritual battle for the Lord. We cannot sit back and let some one else fight our battles for us.

Battle Cry

As the song states "Sound the battle cry, see the foe is nigh, raise the standard high for the Lord, Gird your armor on stand firm everyone, rest your cause upon his Holy Word." Satan is fighting against the cause of Christ. However, we know the cause of Christ will prevail when the soldiers of the cross put on the whole armor of God and fight against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6: 10-13).

The soldiers of Desert Shield were brave volunteers who arose to the occasion when the war began. That is the cry for the soldiers of Christ, to arise. We need brave volunteers.

What Am I Doing

As the war broke out, we saw many people flocking to the recruiting centers. They wanted to go to battle to help their country, to stand beside their friends and help them. They were willing to sacrifice to go over and help.

Deny Ourselves

Jesus asked us to deny ourselves (Mark 8: 34; Matt. 16: 24-27). Too many do not want to deny themselves the pleasures of this world for the cause of Christ. When things we want to do come before service to the Lord that is not denying ourselves. Yet, when the day of judgment comes we are going to want the Lord to give us a home in heaven with him. Jesus said in John 8: 31, "If you

continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." How do we except to be considered a disciple when we won't follow him? Do we say we will follow but make all kinds of excuses for not doing it right now (Luke 9: 59-61; 14: 18-20)?

Stand up for Jesus

Do I stand up for Jesus? Peter said he would lay down his life for him (John 13: 36-38). However when the time came to stand up for Jesus he denied him. Do I, when under fire give up? Do I change my colors (allegiance) so that no one will recognize I am a soldier of the Lord? Consider what happened when the soldiers of Saddam changed colors, the army was defeated. When the soldier of Christ changes loyalty and won't stand with the Lord, the church begins to crumble.

Follow

How does a soldier accomplish what he sets out to do? He follows orders. Paul told the young man Timothy, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6: 11-12). Let us follow Christ (1 Pet. 2: 21). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Am I listening to Christ? Am I keeping his commandments (John 14: 15; Mark 10: 21)?

Result

The war ended quickly. The soldiers listened, obeyed and conquered.

Our life will end quickly. We need to be ready when the time comes for us to step out of this life. We need to be fighting the battle. When we fight the battle as we should we will have a home in heaven (2 Tim. 4: 6-8; 1 Cor. 15: 58).

If you are not a soldier of Christ we plead with you to become one. If you are a soldier that has quit fighting, we plead with you to begin again and show your loyalty to the Lord.

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM DIVORCE

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Some of the characteristics of love are that it "believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13: 7). There are truly some situations that make it difficult to look for the good, especially in crises. It was difficult for Job to see the good in what he was going through. Yet, after it was all over, he was a better man for it. Similarly, it is hard to see how any good can come from a divorce. While these are all lessons that can be learned otherwise, there are some things we can learn from a divorce. It has been rightly suggested that we need to learn from the mistakes of others. Life is just too short to make them all yourself. While we look at some important lessons for the marriage relationship, we'll also consider some ways in which a child who has gone through a divorce can help himself deal with it.

1. We must learn to forgive. Marriage is a lasting relationship only if forgiveness is practiced. Married couples especially need to be kind and tenderhearted toward one another, forgiving each other as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4: 32). No matter how badly we may feel we have been sinned against, we must make every effort we can to forgive and put it behind. If this cannot be done, the marriage is doomed for failure.

2. We must be committed. Upon entering a marriage, the couple needs to have the attitude that no matter what problem may arise, they will deal with it. Divorce is simply not an option. Let God's word determine the correct course of action. One of the most important things that parents can do for their children is to simply love each other (Eph. 5: 25; Titus 2: 4). Be committed to the marriage, and resolve that no matter what happens, you will work it out.

3. Communicate with each other often. Marriages crumble because of a lack of communication. Don't be afraid to talk and tell your spouse the things that trouble you. Don't hold things in for a long time, only to one day explode and make matters worse than they should have been.

4. Understand the importance of treating your spouse as you would have him/her treat you (Matt. 7: 12). Be kind, courteous, and faithful. Anticipate the needs of the other and be sensitive to their feelings. When discussing problems, be kind and gentle. Don't be selfish and rude, pushing to get your own way no matter what the other thinks. A marriage that is not built upon this principle will fail because of selfishness.

5. Realize how much your children are affected by your actions. You are an example, and your children will imitate you. Your actions have the greatest impact on

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their lives. Never underestimate the value of your example to your children.

6. Realize that no one is immune to the evils of divorce (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 12). Don't think, "It can't happen to me." This may cause one to have a lazy approach to their marriage. Never stop working hard at the marriage. While we can certainly have confidence and trust in our marriage, we must avoid an arrogant and lazy attitude. Continue to "court" your spouse and you will have a greater relationship.

7. Learn the proper attitude toward divorce. The Lord says He hates it (Mai. 2: 16). Do you? Are you teaching your children to hate it? Learn the truth about God's law for the marriage relationship and maintain a deep conviction about it. Understand the permanent nature of marriage. Realize the terrible consequences for tampering with God's law (Matt. 19: 1-12). Understand that one who divorces a spouse and remarries for any reason other than fornication is guilty of adultery. If more were convicted of this, perhaps less would consider ending their marriages and would work harder at it. Then, teach your children the truth about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We act upon what we believe; and if what we believe about it is loose and lenient, then don't be surprised to see people acting accordingly. It is too serious to play around with.

To children who have to deal with a divorce, you must also learn to forgive. Your parents are not perfect. They have sinned just as all have (Rom. 3: 23). This doesn't excuse their actions, but your realization of this will help you. You must learn to deal with the facts of the situation. Living in a fantasy world will only hurt you more. It will take some emotional struggle, and it will take some courage to overcome the difficulties; but it can be done. Furthermore, don't let the actions of others determine your relationship with God. Though everyone else fails you, God won't. Learn to hope, trust, and pray. Look to Jesus for the answer to your suffering. Understand also your need to communicate. Talk to your parents and reassure your love for them. Talk to others who will help you. You won't help anyone by digging a hole and burying yourself. You can help yourself through your difficulties, but it will take a desire and courage that you may not even realize you have. Dig deep and let the tragedy become a character building experience.

All of us need to learn to help those who are going through a divorce. Whether it be the couple or the children, we can help them deal with it. The bottom line is that we are trying to save souls. Don't ignore them or act as though they are "unclean." Try to work with them in order to "save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5: 20). May all of us learn the importance of marriage and be committed to our own. Eternal life hangs in the balance. Never lose sight of that.

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BELIEVING GOD

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There are many sections of the scriptures that are especially inspiring for us to read. Some of the most beautiful are found in the Psalms. One particular chapter which encourages me when I'm down is the 11th chapter of Hebrews. As this writer describes these great men and women of faith I am both made to feel very small (because of the littleness of my faith), and at the same time shown what faith is really all about. I am always amazed, though I have read the accounts so many times, of the faith of Noah and of Abraham. Why can't my faith be more like theirs? It becomes clear that my faith still needs to be made stronger, and I believe Hebrews chapter 11 helps me in that.

First notice that in verse 6 the writer said: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* The kind of faith that pleases God is not one that merely accepts the idea that there is a God of some kind, somewhere. Not only must we believe IN God, but we must BELIEVE GOD! Now look with me at some of the examples used to show us this kind of faith.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11: 7). God warned Noah of some things that he had "not seen as yet." What is that Noah had not seen? We can't know for sure, but it appears possible that Noah had never seen rain. In Genesis chapter 2 we find in verse 5, *"for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground"* (v. 5-6). We do know of course that God soon put man in the garden, and could have caused it to rain before the days of Noah, but there is no record of it. And certainly he had never seen a flood like that which was about to come. But Noah not only believed in God, he BELIEVED GOD. He believed in something he had never seen because God said it; and he acted upon his faith by doing just what God wanted. Genesis chapter 6 tells us, *"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he"* (v. 22). Noah believed God and acted upon that faith. Do I have this kind of faith?

Then comes the story of Abraham. Perhaps because I have sons of my own I can identify even more with the story of Abraham. First we learn: *"By faith Abraham,*

when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11: 8-10). Abraham was at this time a married man, and God called him to leave his family, take his wife, and follow where He would lead. Even though Abraham didn't know where he was going he followed. He believed IN God, but he also BELIEVED GOD. He even lived in the promised land with his descendants without receiving the land as his own as God had promised him. But this was not the last test of Abraham's faith. Later in the same 11th chapter of Hebrews we read: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received his promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (v. 17-19).

After first following God to the promised land Abraham waited something like 25 years for part of the promise to be fulfilled in Isaac. Most of us would have given up after about the first 6 months. Then, when the child was still young God commanded Abraham to take

him to Mt. Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering (see Genesis chapter 22). How could God ask this of him? How could he possibly offer up the very son through whom the rest of the land and people promise was to be fulfilled? But Abraham BELIEVED GOD. He not only believed that he must now offer up Isaac in order to please God, but he still believed the earlier promise, "that in Isaac shall thy seed be called." His faith in God was such that he figured that if God had to raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep His promise He would do just that. There is no disputing the fact that Abraham BELIEVED GOD with such a faith that he acted even when what God asked for seemed contrary to logic. How can I be said to BELIEVE GOD if I don't obey in the same way the things God requires of me today?

So many today claim that they believe, and yet when their claim comes face to face with some demand of God that they don't understand or perhaps like, it quickly becomes clear that while they may believe IN God, they don't BELIEVE GOD. When they read Jesus' statement in **Mark 16** saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (v. 16) it quickly becomes clear that while they believe IN Jesus, they don't really BELIEVE JESUS; they don't believe what He said. Somehow we need to clearly, yet in love, point out this distinction to those we deal with, for without this kind of faith no one can be pleasing to God!

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IS BEING ANTI BECOMING A GOOD THING?

Dudley R. Spears

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Students Against Drunk Driving (S. A. D. D.) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (M. A. D. D.) join several other "anti" groups in what has become quite respect-able. The number of anti- "this or that" organizations grows almost daily. Maybe being "anti" something is finally recognized as a good thing after all these years. But it has not always been so. Time was when all that was required to brand someone as wrong, was just to say, "Oh, he (or she) is an anti. "

S. A. D. D. expresses their anti-sentiment to the practice of teens who drive on the public streets and highways while drinking alcohol. The same is true with M. A. D. D., except they are against allowing all drivers who drink alcoholic beverages to drive. These are very respectable anti-organizations and deserve the praise of all right thinking and acting citizens.

Again, it has not always been so. Time was when people were not so precise in the use of the term "anti." Time was when anyone who spoke out against local churches financially subsidizing the operation of a human institution set up to take care of homeless children was called "anti-orphan" (with the obvious intent at

a sick pun). Time was when one who spoke out against the amalgamation of local churches into a super church called a "sponsoring church" was considered "anti-preaching-the-gospel" or "anti-cooperation."

Things do change! Or, is it really true, that "what goes around, comes around?" With the "new hermeneutic" and the revival of so-called "unity meetings" (similar to the old "Murch-Witty Meetings") those who have bandied the term "anti" the most are now being labeled as the "antis." The more "conservative" among those who toss out the terms "anti-orphan" and "anti-cooperation" epithets, are opposed to these "unity" efforts. And because they oppose them, they are looked at as "the antis." They have also come out in strength against the "new hermeneutic." They are called "antis" for their efforts.

It should be a little bit gratifying, but it isn't. Why is it that opposition to a human institution, set up to care for homeless children, financed by local church treasuries, is "anti-orphan" and opposition to this "new hermeneutic" is not anti-hermeneutic? Or why is it that opposition to the sponsoring church type cooperation is anti-cooperation, and opposition to the false standards of these so-called "unity meetings" is not anti-unity?

To all brethren everywhere who find themselves forced to press their opposition against that which they sincerely believe is error, God bless you. To those who still feel that being "anti" is something bad, God help you. There never was (or is) a time that anyone in his or her right mind opposed orphans. Opposition was registered against the unscriptural organization set up to do the work—not the orphan children. There never was a time (or is) when anyone in his or her right mind opposed cooperation of local churches of Christ. Opposition was registered against the unscriptural method of centralization — not cooperation based on sound biblical principles. And the same is true with hermeneutics and unity.

The tactic of branding a sincere opposition to erroneous practices and teachings with an unqualified "anti" is a remnant of an ignorant past. From this day on, with being "anti" becoming more respectable, there may be hope for a stronger church, a church united both in opposition to all that is unquestionably right.

Now, to know for absolute certainty that being "anti" is a pretty good thing, consider the Almighty's expression, "I am against..." You will find it at least five times in Jeremiah, a few more than that in Ezekiel. Each time God told people why he was against them; He specified what was wrong with them. That is what all who would be anti-that-which-is-wrong ought to do. It puts you in real good company. Here are some of the passages where you may learn what God is "anti" toward.

Jeremiah 21: 13; 3: 30; 23: 31; 23: 32; 50: 31; 51: 25; Ezekiel 5: 8; 13: 20; 21: 3; 26: 3; 28: 22; 29: 3; 29: 10; 30: 22; 34: 10; 35: 3; 38: 3; 39: 1.

Take some time to look these up and see just how respectable being "anti" really is.

TWENTIETH CENTURY PERSECUTION

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There are records in my files concerning Christians who were recently sued or abused simply for practicing what was right. Even now, jobs are in jeopardy and managerial benevolence is taken away in efforts to pressure people to do that which is ungodly. There are brethren who have quit their jobs because they could not handle the constant criticism given them because they tried to live as Christians among the ungodly. This writer knows of cases wherein even school children were given more homework simply because they did not participate in school activities they considered wrong. There is ever increasing pressure from society to give women equal roles of authority in all churches. It is important to note that these are not trials or problems created because of ones own sin, but because of the sin that others have in their life. As Christians, we are seeing more and more of this kind of persecution taking place. Many congregations are purchasing "law-suit insurances." The humanistic influence of a hedonistic society is slowly turning society from our favor. We are facing very real possibilities that our faith will be tested in ways we have not had to think of before.

Whether these are warnings of even greater hardships to come or not, how should we as Christians deal with the persecution? Suppose the courts of the land do rule that we must have women preachers or elders? Suppose they prohibit the physical spanking of a child? How should we act if promises of agonizing consequences are given should laws be violated?

"Yet if (any man suffer) as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (1 Pet. 4: 16, KJV). We have countless examples of those who have lived before us and what God expected of them. Noteworthy, are those in the Old Testament, recorded in Hebrews 11 who suffered greatly, due to their faith. Some of these sufferings were "(cruel) mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and (in) mountains, and (in) dens and caves of the earth (KJV—vv. 36-38)."

We often have it so "easy," we lose a sight of the very real hardships that can come to us because we strive to do what is right. Perhaps we need to be reminded that we "are" to suffer for righteousness sake (Mt. 5: 10-12). Paul informed us that it was not just to be expected (2 Tim. 3: 11, 12) but that it "would" happen. We will not be exempt (1 Pet. 4: 12).

Before we begin to fear and quiver into a jellied heap, let

us note what "blessings" these trials can be to the Christian. Persecutions show our word of mouth and our example in life are identical. On Sunday mornings, we profess what we are or want to be but "trials" give us the reality that we are indeed what we claim. We then "know" we are precious to God, not just hay or stubble to be destroyed. Trials teach us that our strength is in God (1 Cor. 3: 13; 2 Cor. 12: 10). They bring us to a patience (steadfastness) that will keep us strong (Rev. 5: 3; Jas. 1: 3). They are the means whereby we glorify our Father (1 Pet. 1: 7).

Indeed, the trials of our faith are more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1: 7). The tears of hardship that come from trials can be changed to tears of joy if we use them to bring us closer to our God! Dear Christian, we know Satan will not give us up easily, but let us endure trials faithfully no matter what may come with the recognition that victory is truly ours (Rev. 5: 3-5).

CARNAL TACTICS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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It is undeniably clear that Jesus lifted the kingdom of God above the plane of conduct normally seen in the kingdoms of earth when He declared, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so I would not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here" (Jn. 18: 36.) While many have not adhered to these words in their efforts on behalf of the kingdom, it is unmistakable that heaven's king did not intend for his rule, or the realm of that rule, to be established, expanded, or defended by those weapons or tactics usually employed on behalf of worldly kingdoms. Political power, conspiracy, gossip, fanning up support among members, whispering campaigns, giving a cold shoulder to people, and other forms of dishonorable behavior must take their place with the carnal sword, because one has as much place in the spiritual kingdom as the other. When these tactics take the place of serious Bible study, prayer, and earnest efforts to prevent and solve problems, problems grow worse and last longer. In such confrontations there is no doubt that Satan wins the victory. It is no marvel that the apostle warned not to give the Devil a place (Eph. 4: 27).

My brethren, it is not right for those claiming to be Christians to treat others in any way they would not also treat Christ. When God's people resort to such carnality, either in their efforts to proclaim Christ and defend the truth or in attempts to handle local-church problems, they open the door to Satan and surrender the battle for truth. Whatever the consequences and whichever side seems to prevail when the dust has cleared, "Christians"

have become the puppets and pawns of Satan, and he has had to do little besides sit on the sideline and have a big time.

Of what do I speak? What are some of these carnal tactics too often employed?

Unfair Treatment of Brethren

Some have been too quick on the trigger, in that they fire at others before they even understand what others mean. They do not know the others to be enemies or friends, but they fire away as if they were dealing with enemies. It is unwise to attack one without knowing beyond doubt that he definitely teaches something. It is unfortunately true that some write in fuzzy phrases, leaving themselves open to criticism. (They really should not write until they can do better, leaving nothing unclear or ambiguous.) When one does write in such fashion, the local "scout" sights him and cries out "Enemy!" Would it not be wise to inquire about his meaning and then attack the error, not the writer, if inquiry shows it necessary to do so?

Others have followed the course of inequity in accusing some of doing what they themselves have been doing. Regardless of one's view on a matter, he should not be attacked for responding to a request to set forth his view, when the attackers have been doing as much themselves. The rule that is golden has much value in dealings with brethren (Matt. 7: 12). Let us never descend to the low level of the spiritual cannibal in devouring each other (Gal. 5: 14, 15). We must learn to deal with the teaching, but no dishonorable treatment of the teacher is permitted!

Establishing Rank in the Church

Brethren rightly protest the distinctions erected between "clergy" and "laity" in human religious systems, but they often commit the same error by developing an elitist view of elders in the local church. Such a view sees elders as inherently blessed with wisdom beyond others so they need no input from the rest of the church. They seem to say, "We're in control, and you need to stay in your place." These elders see no need to keep members informed about the gospel work being supported, financial matters, or major decisions affecting the church. It is beyond them to request prayers, comments, or suggestions from others. While some may not use these very words, they clearly think them because they never solicit or accept such input.

Closely akin to such elitist elders, because it is practiced by them, is the lording it over God's heritage. What else would it take for elders to act as lords, in defiance of the Lord and in opposition to His order in 1 Peter 5: 3, than to display such secretive modes of operating, to refuse to share information with the congregation, and to refuse to listen to others. Elders must remember the charge allotted to them is God's heritage, for them to lead and oversee as God's stewards (caretakers) (Tit. 1: 7). They must lead and shepherd God's people as a sacred trust as God wants them led, not as their own selfish desires would dictate. Paul said elders must not be self-willed men.

How can men such as these inspire confidence in the ones they seek to lead? How can they lead people having no confidence in them as leaders? Because open commu-

nication is needed to have followers, then elders need to sit down with members of the congregation so both sides can benefit from the two-way communication. When the members don't know what the elders are thinking or planning and when elders lack the confidence of the people, there is no more leading than there is following: NONE! Men that should be warning, teaching, exhorting, and setting an example for God's people, in such circumstances as these, are actually lame-duck leaders.

Political Machinations

Satan never has more cause for delight than when he enlists purported disciples of Christ for the work of building political machines in local churches, with them feeding on the desire for power and the grab for power made by those claiming to be of Christ. This kind of power does not exist in the spiritual kingdom (Matt. 20: 20-28). More times than saints would like to think, efforts to line up a base of political power among members have been exerted by having groups to meet and discuss objectives they want to achieve, by use of petitions to exert negative pressure against someone, by refusal to love actively (even to speak to) those against whom the intrigue is being promoted, by gossip campaigns, by a misuse of withdrawal and by other arrogant displays of carnality. How can such people love their brethren? They do not, and they lie if they claim to. Paul's rebuke of similarly motivated saints in Corinth should be headed (1 Cor. 3: 1-4).

Worldly Standards for Spiritual Efforts

In the work of the local church, a spiritual work not susceptible to the same measurements of success or failure applied to material endeavors, it is a major mistake to use the models and images created by the world. Only those provided by the Lord, the church's head, will prove effective.

Trying to fit a preacher into the mold of a church manager or administrator is a colossal mistake. Many brethren think of him as the one around whom all congregational efforts/projects must be centered (ignorant that elders are such leaders). Others think of him as an office-boy with office hours, regardless of the need for him to be elsewhere doing more important things. Some view him as the church's official representative, insisting that he should wear a certain "uniform," make all announcements, and be spokesman for the church. Would somebody kindly favor me with the passage teaching any of these ideas.

While disavowing the term "clergyman," some insist that a preacher must remain aloof from the common people when possible, not dirtying his hands (literally and figuratively) with the more mundane matters of life. They absolutely cringe at the sight of his doing physical labor around the church building, at his house, or at the houses of others. In all of these areas, there have been plenty of preachers who have enjoyed such special treatment and have acted so as to further these notions in people's minds.

The creation of an elite group of "big preachers" in the minds of some is another use of worldly standards inappropriate in the church. These are smoothly praised and flatteringly treated by those who would not cross the road to hear and encourage "smaller" men, as these

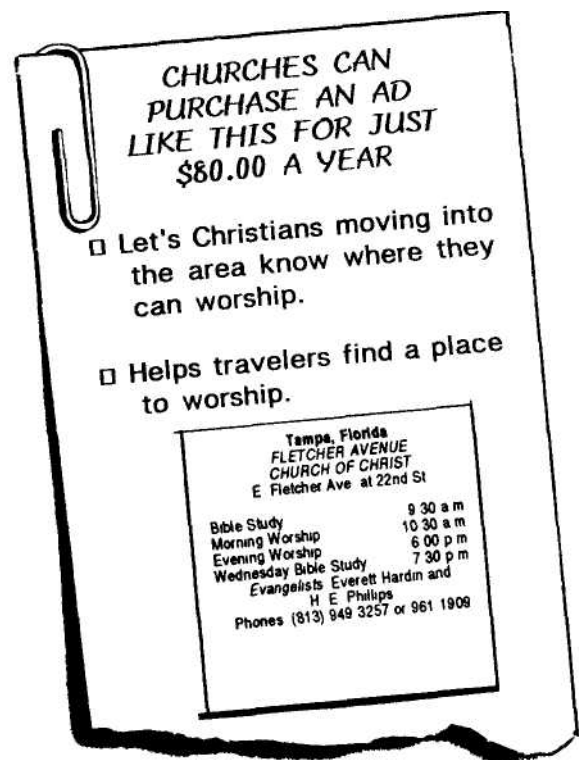
twisted thinkers view them. James 2: 1-13 teaches a needed lesson on impartiality that many of us have not fathomed.

The lures used to attract people to hear the gospel and the devices for measuring the gospel's success also betray much carnal thinking. An impressive building, recreational programs for various ages, the improper citing of attendance and contribution figures, flattering titles for preachers, emphasis on community leaders in a local church, and other such tactics have been employed for good purpose, but without God's favor.

God's people have the only power needed to convert the lost in the gospel divinely given for that purpose (Rom. 1: 16; Jn. 6: 44-45). Nothing else is needed! Nothing else can accomplish God's objective! We must leave all else alone.

Jesus made it clear that in the spiritual kingdom there would be no ranking of citizens, no lording over others, and no tactics relying on arrogant power. Humble service is the only path to divine approval and exaltation, and that can be best observed in the lowly life of the Nazarene, who came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20: 20-28).

Nothing in this article should be construed to teach the no-rule theory of elders or any related idea. Nor should it be concluded that all (even most) elders are of the kind herein discussed. There are also "big preachers" who do not know they are big, but they are big in both life and teaching, just as there are "little preachers" whom God and brethren count big. This writer has been privileged to work under some godly elders, and he is now privileged to serve with some of that kind. He is not "soured" on elders, but there are regrettable instances of the kind discussed here. Truth must be taught on these matters as on all others.





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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

“ . . . They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . . ” — Acts 14: 27

Send all News Items to: Connie W. Adams, P. O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109

J. DAVID POWLAS, 3430 Kay Street, D-3, Columbia, SC 29210— The Lower Richland congregation meets at 3000 Trotter Road. Although we have a Hopkins, SC mailing address, our building is located on the southeast side of Columbia, less than five miles from Gate 5 (Semmes Rd.) of Port Jackson Army base and within ten miles of the McEntire Air National Guard base. Columbia is the state capital and is the home of the University of South Carolina. Please write or call me at (803) 772-4371 to let me know about any saints serving in the military or attending college here. Also, please keep me in mind for future gospel meetings. I am available to preach in two or three meetings this year.

NEW WORK

A new congregation was established in Marietta, OH on January 6, 1991 with 13 present. They have 10 members with attendance in the 20's. The church is meeting at 324 4th St. in the conference room of the Ohio Gas Co.

The times of their services on Sunday are 9: 45, 10: 30 and 6: 00. They meet on Wednesday evening at 7: 30.

If you are traveling in the area or know of someone living in the area who may be interested, contact these brethren by writing to: 4th St. Church of Christ, P. O. Box 44, Marietta, OH 45750 or call Sheldon Blair (373-0367) or Joe Schofield (373-0064).

DEBATES

ON CONGREGATIONAL BENEVOLENCE—JULY 8, 9, 11, 12, 1991. Jesse G. Jenkins and Steve Gibson will discuss the following propositions. "The Scriptures teach that a church, from its treasury, may provide benevolent aid to a sinner or one who is safe." Gibson will affirm; Jenkins will deny.

"The Scriptures teach that a local church's benevolent work is limited to relieving only saints who are unavoidably destitute." Jenkins will affirm; Gibson will deny.

On July 8 and 9 the debate will be at the building of the Highway 95 church of Christ in Taylor, TX (across from Wal-Mart). On July 11 and 12 it will be in the building of the Twin City church of Christ, 810 Southwest Parkway, College Station, TX. Taylor is thirty miles northeast of Austin on 79. College Station is about eight miles east of Taylor, and about half way between Waco and Houston on Highway 6. The discussion begins at 7: 00 each evening.

For further information, call Jesse Jenkins (409) 268-3069 or Steve Gibson (512) 352-6444.

ON THE GENERAL CHURCH QUESTION—AUGUST 5, 6, 8, 9 1991. Kevin Campbell will debate Cecil Patterson (Missionary Baptist) in Gulfport, MS. The proposition for the four nights will be: "The church of which I am a member is scriptural in origin, name and doctrine." Campbell will affirm the proposition the first two nights and Patterson will affirm it the last two. The debate will begin at 7: 00 each evening. The place has not been decided. For more information contact Kevin Campbell at 106 Beverly Dr., Gulfport, MS 39503 or (601) 831-4357 or 832-5529.

OBITUARIES

ETHEL RANDOLPH—This is to inform your readers of the passing of sister Ethel Randolph, widow of Wright Randolph and sister of Roy Cogdill. She is survived by one sister, Ida Terrell, who attends the congregation here at S. W. 84th Street in Oklahoma City.

Ethel spent the last year of her life in a nursing home here in the Oklahoma City area. In death, even as in life, Ethel maintained her interest in the Lord's church and her faith in God. Ethel was buried in her childhood home of Hobart, OK on March 26, 1991. — Submitted by Phil T. Arnold, 3228 S. W. 96th St. OKC, OK 73159.

LURIED LOBB (1928-1991)— On the afternoon of January 7, 1991, Luried Lobb, a faithful Christian and member of the Lord's church at Campbellsville, KY, passed away.

Brother Lobb was only 62 years old. He retired last April and was busy enjoying life. He worked improving his home, but more importantly, he was in the greatest work of all—teaching the gospel. He and his devoted wife, Lois, were looking forward to her retirement in a few years, when they could spend more good time together.

Luried was born and raised near Greensburg. When he was a teenager, he and his father obeyed the gospel and led the rest of the family to Christ. He married Lois Parson in February 1950. He led her to the truth and they both became active members at a church near Greensburg. In 1953 they moved to Campbellsville and helped establish a sound church there. Luried gave of his boundless energy to the work and through the years was a stabilizing influence for good.

He was not widely known as a located preacher (which he was not), but he did preach and teach the word to all who would listen. He influenced more than many "located preachers" have. Much of his work was effected through private Bible study in homes of people throughout the area.

Luried loved his family dearly and was loved by them. The Lord blessed Luried and Lois with two children: Wanda and Wendell. He is survived by all these and four grandchildren. All of his family who are old enough have obeyed the gospel — a testimony to his influence for good.

Luried's funeral was conducted at Campbellsville on January 10 by Scott Vifquain, Dorris V. Rader and Billy Ashworth. His earthly remains lie buried in sight of the church building where he attended. The church has lost a faithful, zealous worker. His family has lost a dear loved one. My wife and I have lost one of our dearest brothers in Christ.

We extend our sincere sympathy to and fervent prayers for Lois and all who mourn Luried's death. We do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4: 13). — Submitted by Billy Ashworth, Rt. 3, Box 215, Columbia, TN 38401.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

PHILIPPINES — Dominador J. Neniell reports that six were baptized and were added to the Magpet church in February.

Emeterio A. Piciwien reports that Luis Cabrera, a Pentecostal preacher for 26 years, was baptized on February 20, 1991. On

February 26, 1991 there was a one day meeting at Lasam Cagayanan in which eight were baptized. On February 28th at Cawayan Isabela there were two baptized. Five were baptized on March 28th at Baculod Iguig, Cagayan.

Wilbert Garingo Enostacion — P. O. Box 09, San Fernando 2500, La Union, Philippines — I was invited by the church in China, particularly the Hong Kong church, to work with them for a limited period. While I was there, I was able to baptize two people. Jeff Kingry baptized one and Bob Small baptized four. In mainland China seven were immersed by Jeff and Dale Smelser.

The Hong Kong church had its beginning in 1988. Jeffrey and Anna Kingry went to China to teach English at some Chinese Universities and used that medium to reach Chinese people by the gospel. On their "survey" of the land, they went to Hong Kong and found the people were more receptive, especially those Filipinos in that land working as DH (domestic helpers,). As reported by the Philippine embassy in Hong Kong, there are more than fifty-thousand Filipinos there.

While in Hong Kong, Jeff and Dale worked as a team while Bob Small and I worked as a team. Our team focused on some Asians. Our contacts were with the Filipinos and the Chinese.

In March 1991, Dale and Marlene Smelser left China for Prague, Czechoslovakia to join their sons, Tim and Scott. The work in China will be put into the hands of Jeff and Bob. Both men are good gospel preachers. However, both have expressed the need of a Filipino family to work with them among the fifty-thousand Filipinos there.

As soon as support can be arranged, my wife, Maria Nenita, and I plan to move to Hong Kong where I will do the work of an evangelist. Our stay will be limited to five or six years because by 1997 the Chinese communist government will take it over. Therefore, it is a MUST for workers of God today to work DOUBLE TIME in that short period.

If enough support can be raised, we plan to move before the end of 1991. Please help the cause of Christ in China. My family and I have decided to take the risk and would endure great sacrifices. If any are interested in extending the right hand of fellowship with us, please contact these brethren who know my life and work: Jeffrey Kingry — Hong Kong (852) 898-7706 or FAX (852) 898-7815; Robert Small — Hong Kong (852) 889-3815; Earl Robertson — 514 South Green St., Glasgow, KY 42141; Connie W. Adams — P. O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109 — (502) 957-2257; Cecil Willis — (409) 642-1456; Weldon E. Warnock — Beckley, WV — 252-8163; John A. Humphries — Louisville, KY (502) 499-9942; Walter D. Bunnell — P. O. Box 657, Eldorado, AR — 826-5209.

WEST AFRICA — I. O. Aku, P. O. Box 12587, Umungasi Aba, Imo State sent pictures of 13 baptisms. Among them was a deacon in the Qua Iboe church and a pastor of an Orthodox church.

PREACHERS NEEDED

YAKIMA, WASHINGTON — The church in Yakima is looking for a mature, sound man. Support is available. The church has about 75 in attendance. Yakima is a city of 50, 000 with a Junior college. Contact: Morris May (509) 248-8190.

STARKE, FLORIDA—The Southside church of Christ is looking for a preacher. Contact: Frank Crews (904) 468-2225.

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